

TOP SECRET

28 April 1980

## MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

Staff Meeting Minutes of 28 April 1980

25X1

The Director chaired the meeting. 

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Hetu called attention to a 27 April New York Times article (attached) by Richard Burt "Officials Describe Painstaking Plan of Military and Agents Sent to Iran." Hetu noted particularly Burt's continuing access to Administration officials on sensitive matters and his ability to gather related details. Noting the need to develop a damage assessment, the Director asked Hetu to gather information and/or copies of captured classified photos, maps, and other documents displayed publicly by Iranian militants as a result of the aborted rescue operation. (Action: D/PA)

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Noting media reports of Soviet missiles in Afghanistan, Clarke said NFAC has identified FROG missiles (30-40 kilometer range) with Soviet military divisions in Afghanistan. He added, however, that SCUD missiles (250 kilometer range) have not been seen in Afghanistan.

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Hitz briefly reviewed Congressional sessions for this week noting the HPSCI mark-up of the Foreign Aid Bill is scheduled for 30 April but that the date for SFRC mark-up is likely to slip. He said Congressional review of Charter legislation this week comes at an inopportune time and that difficulties can be expected. In this regard, the Director indicated he would consult today with  re a strategy.

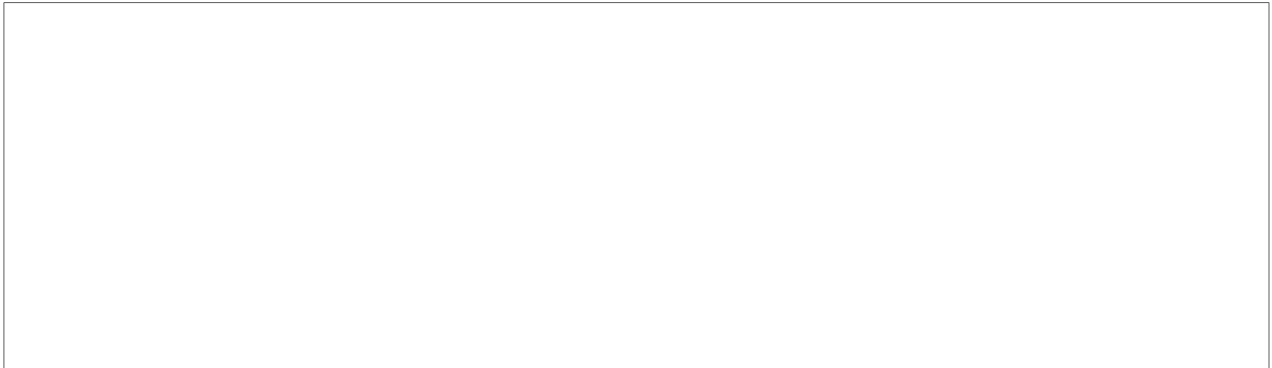
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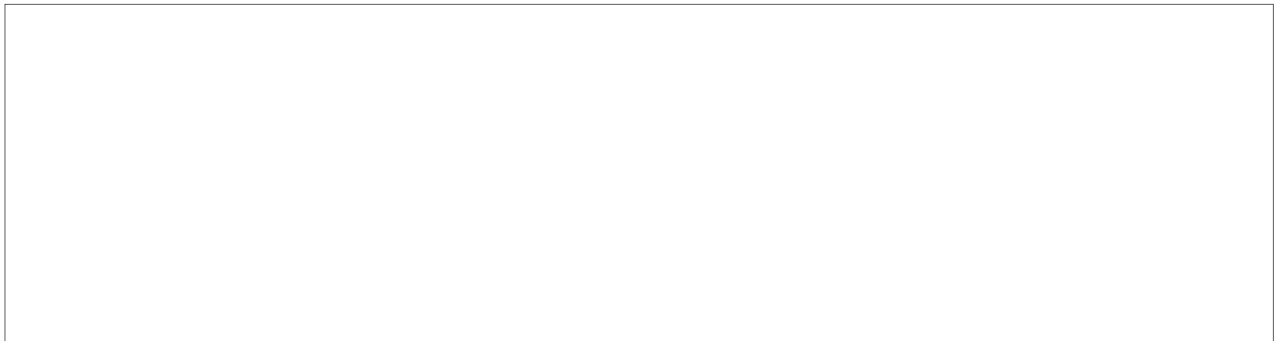
The Director expressed his regret re the imminent resignation of Secretary Vance. Despite occasional differences of opinion between CIA and State, the Director stated he has always found the Secretary to be cooperative and fair.

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The Director said we will need continuing contributions from all areas of the Agency--good thinking, ideas, and analyses of alternatives--toward next steps re Iran.

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Attachment

\*See sealed EYES ONLY envelope filed only with original Staff Meeting Minutes in ES for sensitive topic.

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ARTICLE APPEARED  
ON PAGE A-18

NEW YORK TIMES

APRIL 1980

WASHINGTON, April 26 — Officials closely associated with the attempt to rescue the American hostages in Iran acknowledged today that the operation was one of the most difficult ever attempted by the United States military. But they asserted that the mission had been worked out with painstaking care, including the use of paramilitary forces infiltrated into Teheran in recent months.

The forces, which were said to have entered Iran using forged foreign passports, were to assist the 90-member commando team in its effort to storm the American Embassy in Teheran and free the 50 hostages there, the officials said.

Military experts in and out of Government have begun to raise questions about key aspects of the mission:

¶Why did the Administration rely on such a small force for such a difficult military operation?

¶Why was the mission aborted when the American forces still possessed five working helicopters for use in the rescue operation?

¶Even if the force had been able to get to Teheran, how did the Administration expect to be able to free the hostages and get them out of Iran without major loss of life?

#### Congressional Hearings Expected

Although Senator Henry M. Jackson, Democrat of Washington, has already called the mission "nothing short of a disaster," the Administration so far has escaped wide public criticism. But White House and Pentagon aides expect to come under heavy fire during the next few weeks, if, as expected, the Senate and House armed services committees hold hearings.

Anticipating this, officials emphasized that the Administration's rescue mission had been approved by the Joint Chiefs of Staff and every other senior military officer involved in the operation. According to the officials, the overall commander was an Army major general, James B. Vaught. An Air Force general, Philip Gast, the former chief of the American military advisory mission in Teheran, was also involved in commanding the mission, they added. The ground commander was Col. Charlie A. Beckwith of the Army.

Although some high-ranking military officers expressed doubts over whether a 90-member force could succeed in freeing the hostages, officials close to the mission said that the Administration had earlier considered using an even smaller military team for storming the embassy grounds in Teheran. The officials said that the most important planning goal in the mission was to avoid detection and that this required a minimum number of troops as well as helicopters and transport aircraft.

## Officials Describe Painstaking Plan Of Military and Agents Sent to Iran

By RICHARD BURT

Special to The New York Times

#### Special Procedures Required

The priority placed on avoiding detection, officials said, also forced the military team to work out extraordinary procedures, such as flying helicopters at night over long distances without radio communications and refueling without lights. One official said that when planning for the mission got under way last November "for two months nobody thought it was possible."

Another said the desire to avoid detection was an important factor in deciding to launch the helicopters from the aircraft carrier Nimitz in the Arabian Sea rather than using a base on land, which might have led to detection of the helicopters by the Soviet Union and other nearby powers.

In a briefing for reporters today, a senior Administration aide said that in retrospect a larger force of helicopters would have enabled the mission to proceed after the American team lost three of the aircraft in the initial leg of the mission from the Nimitz to the airstrip 200 miles south of Teheran. But the official said that even adding two additional helicopters to the original force of eight would have created serious new logistical problems.

Apart from the helicopter issue, there were questions about how the American team was actually going to move into the embassy compound and then leave with the hostages. Officials said the actual assault on the compound required the help of American agents provided by the Central Intelligence Agency and some special forces provided by the American military who were gradually infiltrated into the city early this year.

#### Landing Area for Copters Located

These agents, working with Iranians opposed to the existing Government in Teheran, are said to have laid plans for the assault on the embassy by locating a secure landing area for the helicopters outside Teheran. The American agents purchased trucks and other vehicles with which to transport the commando team to the embassy from the helicopter landing area, they said.

The rescue plan, according to the officials, called for the helicopters to arrive at a landing area near Damavand, a mountainous region east of Teheran, early yesterday morning. During the day, the helicopters and the commando team were to remain hidden at the landing area.

Yesterday, officials said, the commando team was to be moved into Teheran aboard the trucks provided by and driven by the C.I.A. and Pentagon officers. The first stop, they added, was to be a warehouse on the outskirts of Teheran where last-minute briefings for the commando team were scheduled.

Following the briefings, the commando team was to move to the embassy in the trucks.

Officials said that a detailed attack plan for attacking the embassy had been prepared, based mainly on American blueprints of the buildings on the compound and extensive, last-minute reconnaissance. The placement of electric and telephone lines had been pinpointed, they said, and individual commandos had the responsibility for cutting these lines.

One official said that once the militants guarding the embassy had been "neutralized" and the hostages collected the helicopters would have been called in from the mountain base outside the city. The helicopters, each able to carry about 40 passengers, were supposed to evacuate all the commandos, the hostages, the American paramilitary units and the Iranian agents, less than 200 people in all.

The officials said that if it proved impossible to land the helicopters at the embassy, the Americans were to have moved to the Amjadieh soccer stadium, located a few hundred yards from the compound, where they would then be airlifted out.

From Teheran, the helicopters were to fly to Desert Two, officials said, an abandoned airstrip in a remote area west of Teheran to rendezvous with the six C-130 air cargo planes flown into the country on Thursday. At this point, they said, all the helicopters were to be abandoned and everyone was to have flown out of the country aboard the C-130's.